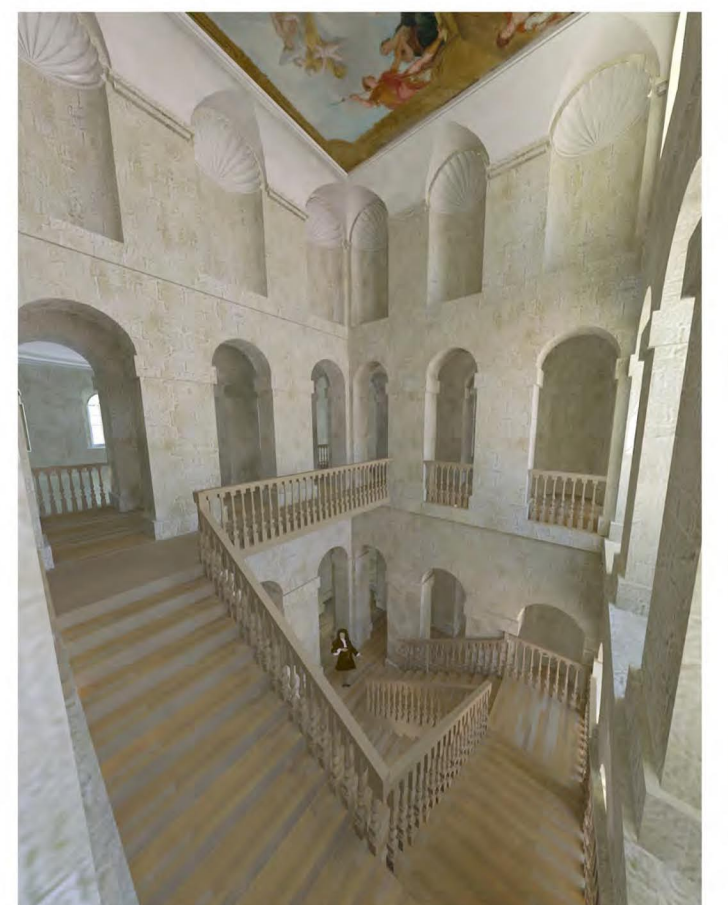
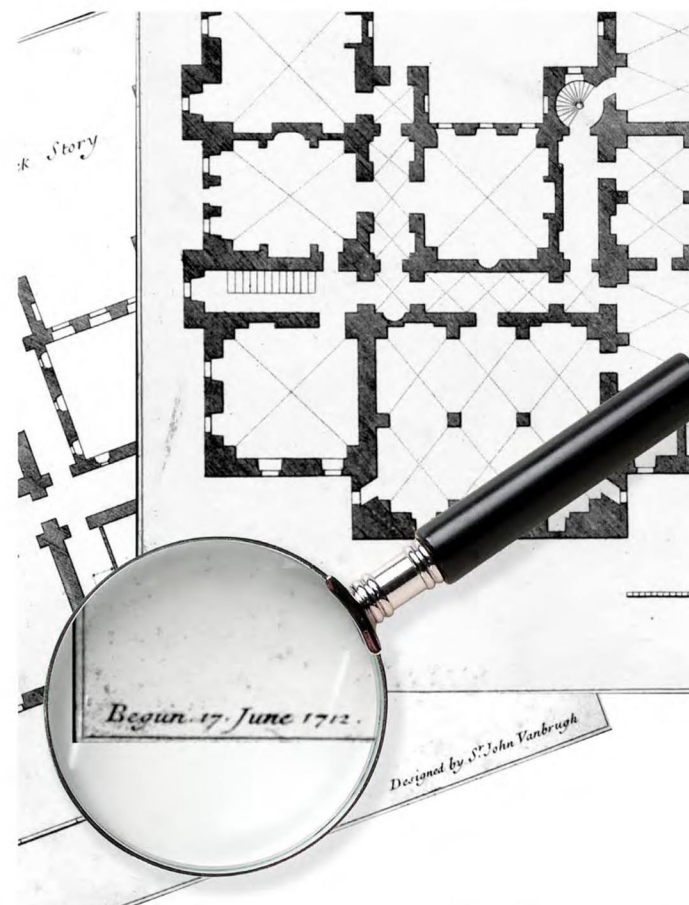
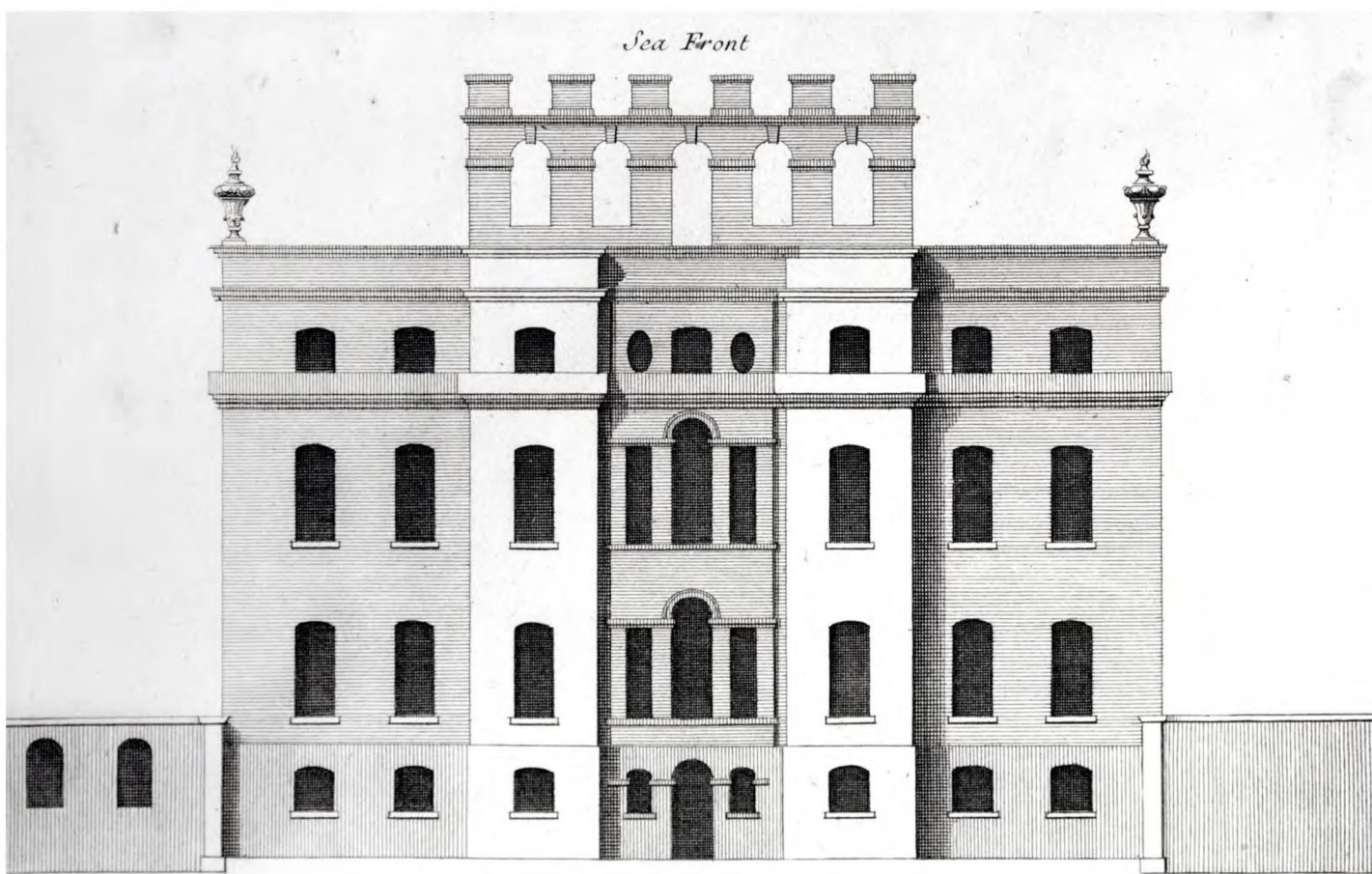


# 300th anniversary



## Construction c.1712

The date of Sir John Vanbrugh's designs for Kings Weston House and its construction history have been the subject of a lot of discussion in the past. Based on new evidence KWAG can now not only suggest a year the project commenced, but an actual date; 17th July 1712.

Where does such an exact date come from? A series of architectural prints were produced by the eminent French architectural engraver Marriette in 1724. These were discovered hidden away in the City Records office with a hand written note stating they had been found packed around vegetables in a London market, and sent as a gift to Skinner Miles who, at that time, owned the house. In themselves the prints are interesting because they show the house as it was when recently completed; the only full set of drawings to exist. The

engravings show the plans and facades of Kings Weston House stating that it was built in 1712. One page goes further however saying "begun 17th June 1712".

Piecing together other parts of the puzzle around this date we have developed new theories about how Vanbrugh's house evolved from the Tudor mansion that preceded it. Very soon after the reported start date, on Xxxxxxx 1713 Vanbrugh writes to Edward Southwell about dismantling the scaffolding and the design of the iconic chimneys, but in the same year we know that Archbishop King was also staying at the house. So how was it built so quickly and how were guests still able to stay?

The answer seems to be that the new house was built in phases and progressively replaced the Tudor

mansion. The entrance front and south west wing (the first phase) is likely to have been built directly in front of the old building and could easily have been at roof height by the time Vanbrugh wrote. This could enable the old house to remain in use for the family and guests. Gradually the garden and 'sea' fronts were built in phases that replaced the corresponding wings of the old building. The extended construction period concluded with the stair hall on the site of the Tudor Great Hall and the whole building was completed in about 1719.

This would not have been an unusual approach. Dyrham House near Bath, owned by the Southwell's friends the Blathwayt's, closely parallels the development of Kings Weston. Soon after William Blathwayt acquired Dyrham in 1686 he set about constructing an impressive new

west front to his old manor house. This was completed, inside and out, within the space of two years. Shortly afterwards a second phase grafted a palatial east front onto the old building. Sandwiched between the two the former Great Hall was transformed into a grand reception room.

Using the available evidence KWAG has been able to reconstruct Kings Weston House as Vanbrugh originally conceived it, and before major alterations in the 1760's designed by Robert Mylne and the 1840's by Thomas Hopper radically changed it. The images here are the closest we can get to seeing these lost interiors as the architect intended them to be seen - a theatrical interplay of spaces and arcades.



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